

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Nixon and China: a Document Based Question

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Determine policies that marked a turning point in the relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC)
- Assess historical events involving the United States and the PRC
- Relate primary documents to the relationship between the two countries
- Explore the impact of US–PRC agreements on other countries

Time: 1–2 class periods (based on use of extension activities)

Materials: Documents: (Excerpts used in DBQ.)

1971 *Secret Diplomacy: The Historic Opening to China*

1972 *Joint Communiqué of the United States and the People's Republic of China*

1979 *Joint Communiqué of the United States and the People's Republic of China Establishing Diplomatic Relations*

1979 *The Taiwan Relations Act*

Procedures:

1. Use documents (A-I included with the DBQ) for a document based question in Advanced Placement U.S. History, other U.S. History classes, International Relations, or in courses pertaining to Chinese History.

2. Prepare copies of prompt and documents before class.

3. Provide students with the document based question.

Analyze the methods and motives that led to the opening of China by the Nixon Administration.

4. Allow a class period for students to address the prompt.

5. Teacher information about primary documents:

- a. 1972 portrait of U.S. President Richard Nixon with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and Chinese leader Mao Zedong forming his ears, a commentary on Nixon's developing relations with communist leaders during the Cold War. (Commentary from the Library of Congress website)

- b.** Communication from President Richard Nixon to Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), Premier of the PRC, via Agha Hilary, the Pakistani ambassador in Washington, May 10, 1971. Hilary then delivered the message to Yahya Khan, President of Pakistan. In turn, Yahya passed the information to the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan who notified Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), chairman of the Communist Party in the PRC. This indirect communication proved the best means of reaching the Chinese leaders, guaranteeing the secrecy that surrounded plans for Nixon's trip.
- c.** A memorandum from Dr. Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor to President Nixon on July 14, 1971, immediately after his return from China on "My Talks with Chou En-lai (Zhou En-lai)." The sensitivity of the information can be deduced from its security classifications: "Top Secret, Sensitive, Exclusively Eyes Only."
- d.** United Nations' Resolution 2758 (XXVI), October 25, 1971. This resolution approved a change in Chinese representation, seating the People's Republic of China and removing the government of Chiang Kai-shek.
- e.** Partly based on information from sources in Hong Kong as well as a NCNA (New China News Agency) article, this report analyzed the anti-Soviet campaign then mobilizing in China. INR's China watchers suspected that Chinese authorities promoted the campaign to "coalesce internal unity" and strengthen the regime, but they also believed that it reflected a "genuine fear of [Soviet] attack." To that extent, Beijing designed the domestic mobilization—the manifestation of "national consciousness of the Soviet danger"—to have a deterrent effect on the Kremlin's decision-making. Significantly, the NCNA piece suggested some concern about Soviet nuclear-armed missiles on the border while INR cited a nuclear threat made during an unofficial Soviet radio broadcast during March 1969. (Commentary from the National Archives, NARA SN 67-69 Pol Chicom-USSR)
- f.** Excerpts from Shanghai Communiqué, a joint communiqué from the United States and PRC issued February 27, 1972 at the end of Nixon's week-long visit to China. The communiqué was the culmination of visits between U.S. National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, Zhou Enlai, and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua. Essentially, the United States and China agreed to pursue normalization of their relations. The communiqué reveals that the United States is on the path of a One-China policy, although the plans for Taiwan (and the Two-China policy of the United States) are incomplete.
- g.** Toast delivered February 21, 1972 by President Richard Nixon at final banquet with Zhou Enlai in Peking (Beijing).
- h.** A joint announcement by the United States and China on the establishment of diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979.

i. The Taiwan Relations Act, included here as excerpts, was the key piece of legislation needed to complete the normalization of relations with the PRC, since the Carter administration could not be seen to abandon its long-time ally, Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China. This April 1979 document defines the One-China policy of the United States more clearly.

Extension Activities:

1. Divide the documents among the students. Have each student or small group explain how the assigned document relates to Nixon's diplomatic interaction with China. Have students pay close attention to the dates, key players, and symbolism portrayed in each primary document. As a class, combine the information and chart the path of relations between the United States, the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan.

2. Have students listen to Nixon discussing and planning his historic visit to China. Identify key people, events, and places referenced in these conversations. Use the site:

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/tapeexcerpts/chinatapes.php>

3. Have students analyze the document, *Secret Diplomacy: The Historic Opening to China*, and determine the significance of the United States following either a "Two-Chinas" Policy or a "One-China" Policy. Students must resolve what the two Chinas are and why the United States changed to the "One-China" concept.

- a. Assign the numbers 1–7 among students until all have one of the numbered sections.
- b. Have students read their assigned sections. The sections are in chronological order.
- c. Beginning with Section 1, have students explain the content of the document.
- d. As students progress through the numbered sections, they should see the process involved in arranging Nixon's trip to China.
- e. What are the students' views on the organizational methods used, the efforts at secrecy, considerations of other countries and their reactions, and finally President Nixon's advice to Henry Kissinger in Section 7? ■